



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

INEZ MOORE TENENBAUM  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** District Superintendents  
District Transportation Supervisors

**FROM:** Donald N. Tudor, Director  
Office of Transportation

**DATE:** September 30, 2002

**RE:** School Bus Driver Physical Performance Tests

Over the past several years, the State Department of Education (SDE) and the school districts have been involved in a coordinated effort to address a number of school bus driver training, testing, and licensing issues. One such issue was how to determine if school bus drivers have the physical ability to successfully do their job and, most importantly, to carry out the emergency evacuation of students. This issue was studied by the Student Transportation Steering Committee and a recommendation was made to the State Board of Education to establish a school bus driver physical performance evaluation procedure similar to that used in Oregon, New York, Indiana, and North Carolina. Based on this recommendation, the State Board of Education, in the summer of 1999, began the promulgation of a change to Regulation 43-80, Part T that would require a school bus driver physical performance evaluation. The State Board submitted this regulatory change to the General Assembly in April 2000. On approval of the General Assembly, the regulatory change became law in January 2001. Since that date, the SDE has been working with a special task force composed of school district and SDE representatives to design the detail procedure to implement this evaluation process. A copy of this procedure is attached for your review.

The School Bus Driver Physical Performance Tests (PPT) will begin November 1, 2002. On and after November 1, 2002, the certification of all new school bus drivers will include the PPT in conjunction with the behind-the-wheel training and testing. Existing licensed/certified school bus drivers will be required to pass the PPT when they renew their CDL license (once every five years) and as a part of their interim behind-the-wheel assessment (occurring during the third year of license certification). If an existing driver's license expires or the interim assessment is due between November 1, 2002, and July 31, 2003, an existing school bus driver will be given until July 31, 2003, to pass the PPT. Existing drivers who have interim behind-the-wheel assessments due after July 31, 2003, are required to take the PPT in association with the interim assessment, but will be given an additional 90 days to pass the PPT.

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The SDE pledges to closely monitor the testing results during the first year of implementation to determine the ability of school bus drivers to pass the PPT. The monitoring will evaluate the success drivers have in passing each of the six standards of the PPT and document reasons for driver failures and incompletes. During and after this first year, the SDE will issue monitoring reports and, where necessary, will make adjustments to the PPT requirements.

The SDE's driver trainers will be available to administer the PPT and will work with school districts to certify district personnel so that they can administer the PPT. During October 2002, the SDE will conduct training workshops for district safety officers and certified behind-the-wheel trainers on the PPT. The SDE will provide each certified test administrator with the required PPT test kit.

Should your or your staff have any questions, please contact Mr. John Dozier of my staff (803-734-8245).

DNT/bc

Attachment

cc: Area and County Supervisors

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